

MUSHROOM Culture in the United States Is a Growing Industry

Few people realize that millions of pounds of cultivated mushrooms are grown and consumed in the United States annually. It has been estimated that more than 15,000,000 pounds were grown in this country in 1927. Fresh cultivated mushrooms are now a staple food in most of our large cities. The New York City market is the largest. It is not unusual for this market to consume 30 tons of fresh mushrooms in a single day. More than 300 growers have joined forces in the Mushroom Growers' Cooperative Association of Pennsylvania to convince the American public that there is absolutely no danger from eating cultivated mushrooms. Contrary to the general opinion, fresh mushrooms are reasonably low in price throughout most of the year.

The principal center of production is in eastern Pennsylvania, but there are also large commercial mushroom plants in the Hudson River

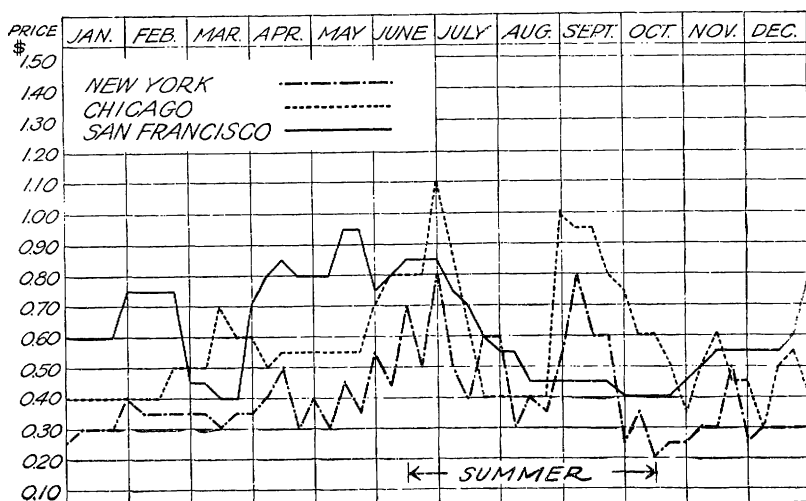


FIGURE 170.—Average weekly price per pound of fresh mushrooms in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco in 1927

Valley of New York, in Ohio, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, and on the Pacific coast. There are numerous growers who raise more than 50 tons of mushrooms a year and at least two who are said to produce more than 1,000,000 pounds a year. That there is a widespread interest in the industry is shown by the fact that in 1927 the Department of Agriculture answered more than 2,000 inquiries regarding mushroom culture from practically every State in the Union. Table 10 shows the average prices for 1927 in three cities.

TABLE 10.—Average price in cents per pound of mushrooms at New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, 1927

Market	Summer	Winter	Yearly
New York.....	48	35	40
Chicago.....	52	55	53
San Francisco.....	55	66	62

Several growers are canning mushrooms on an extensive scale, and American canned mushrooms may be found on the shelves of chain stores in almost every locality. However, this industry must meet foreign competition. According to the statistics of the Department of Commerce, the imports into the United States of prepared and preserved mushrooms have been rapidly increasing in spite of a 45 per cent ad valorem tariff rate. In 1924 there were imported 3,902,786 pounds of canned mushrooms, principally from France, and in 1927 imports reached 6,152,815 pounds.

Aside from foreign competition and the lethargic public demand, the chief limitations of the industry are the increase of parasites and the growing scarcity of horse manure. With the development of large centers of mushroom growing the problem of controlling fungous diseases and insect pests is becoming more and more acute. The Mycogone disease and plaster mold apparently are the principal fungous menaces of cultivated mushrooms. Mushroom flies, mites, and springtails are the chief offenders among the pests. In January, 1928, projects for the solution of these and allied problems were organized in the Bureau of Entomology and the Bureau of Plant Industry.

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MUSKRAT Farming in Marsh Areas Becomes a Profitable Industry. Many persons now living can remember the good old days of muskrat trapping, when in early youth they made a good profit in selling the skins for as little as 15 to 25 cents apiece. Now muskrat pelts have advanced practically tenfold in price, the carcasses are sold

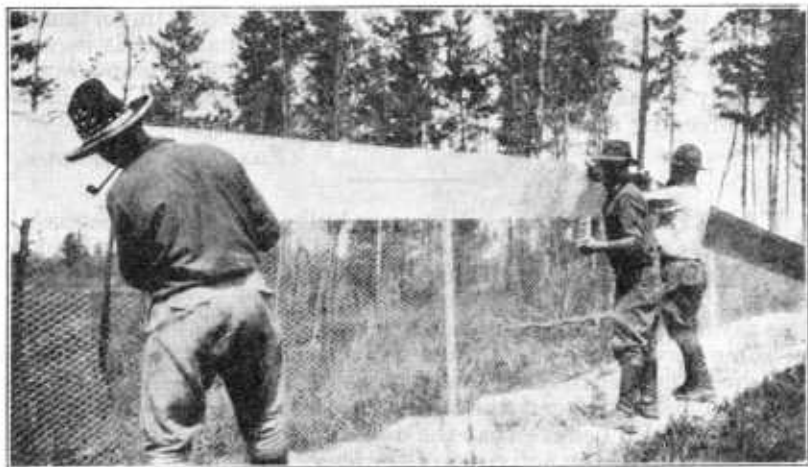


FIGURE 171.—Woven-wire fence in process of construction to inclose an area devoted to muskrat farming. The strip of metal at the top prevents muskrats from leaving the premises and lessens losses from natural enemies

as meat for as much as the pelts formerly brought, and the annual catch in the United States has reached the 14,000,000 mark. The earliest use for muskrat fur was in the manufacture of an excellent imitation of beaver hats. Modern fur dressers and dyers now imitate also many of the more costly furs with that of the muskrat. This